

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 01756 241657Z
ACTION SS-25

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O 241625Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 78

S E C R E T BOGOTA 01756

EXDIS

E.O. GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, CASC, CO
SUBJECT: KIDNAPPING OF PEACE CORPS COLUNTEER: SITREP 15

1. PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR SORXANO CALLED ON DR. VILLAMIL THIS MORNING. SORZANO FOLLOWED GUIDANCE CONTAINED STATE 039688. HE STRESSED THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE PEACE CORPS AND EMPHASIZED THAT STARR , LIKE ALL VOLUNTEERS, WAS A PRIVATE CITIZEN HERE TO HELP THE COLOMBIAN PEOPLE AND THAT HE WAS NOT AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL. SORZANO UNDERLINED HIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR STARR'S SAFETY AND REITERATED THE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL CONTAINED IN HIS LETTER, WHILE AT SAME TIME INDICATING THAT VILLAMIL'S DEMANDS COULD NOT BE MET AND WERE NOT NEGOTIABLE.

2. VILLAMIL, WHO DID NOT BECOME ANGRY OR AGITATED, SAID THAT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DELIVER THE LETTER AND HE RETURNED IT TO SORZANO. VILLAMIL SUGGESTED THAT SORZANO COULD DELIVER THE LETTER HIMSELF BY GOING TO NEIVA (A DANGEROUS DITY ABOUT 200 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF BOGOTA NEA THE FARC BASE AREA) AND GIVING IT TO ONE BEN-HUR MACHOLA, WHO IS DIRECTOR OF A COOPERATIVE THERE. VILLAMIL PROVIDED MACHOLA'S PHONE NUMBER. HE SAID HE WOULD ALERT MACHOLA TO POSSIBILITY OF RECEIVEING A VISIT FROM SORZANO, POSSIBLY ON SATURDAY. SORZANO TOLD VILLAMIL THAT HE COULD MAKE NO COMMITMENT AND THAT INDEED IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO GO TO NEIVA. VILLAMIL THEN SUGGESTED THAT

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SORZANO PHONE HIM OR CONTACT HIM AGAIN MONDAY FEBRUARY 28. VILLAMIL ADDED THAT THE ONLY HOPE WAS TO PAY A RANSOM FOR STARR AND THAT THIS SHOULD BE DONE HERE IN BOGOTA TO AVOID GOC SURVEILLANCE AND ITERCEPTION. HE ADDED THAT FARC HAS URBAN CONTACTS HERE WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO ARRANGE THIS. HE ADVISED SORZANO TO SET UP A SECURE HPONE FOR THIS PURPOSE TO AVOID THE IN-EVITABLE TAPPING OF HIS USUAL PHONES. SORZANO MADE NO COMMENT AND

THE MEETING ENDED.

3. COMMENT: AS REPORTED EARLIER, WE FEEL THAT THE FIRST SORZANO-VILLAMIL CONTACT WILL RESULT OR HAS RESULTED IN ATTAINMENT OF OUR OBJECTIVE OF GETTING THE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL TO THE FARC, DESPITE VILLAMIL'S DEMURRER. FOR THIS, AMONG OTHER REASONS WE SEE NO NEED FOR MAKING A FURTHER CONTACT IN NEIVA AND WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT SORZANO NOT CONTACT VILLAMIL AGAIN, AS THE LATTER REQUESTED, BECAUSE HE OBVIOUSLY SEES SUCH MEETINGS AS A WAY TO LEAD US DOWN THE PATH TO RANSOM NEGOTIATIONS.
SANCHEZ

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NNN

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